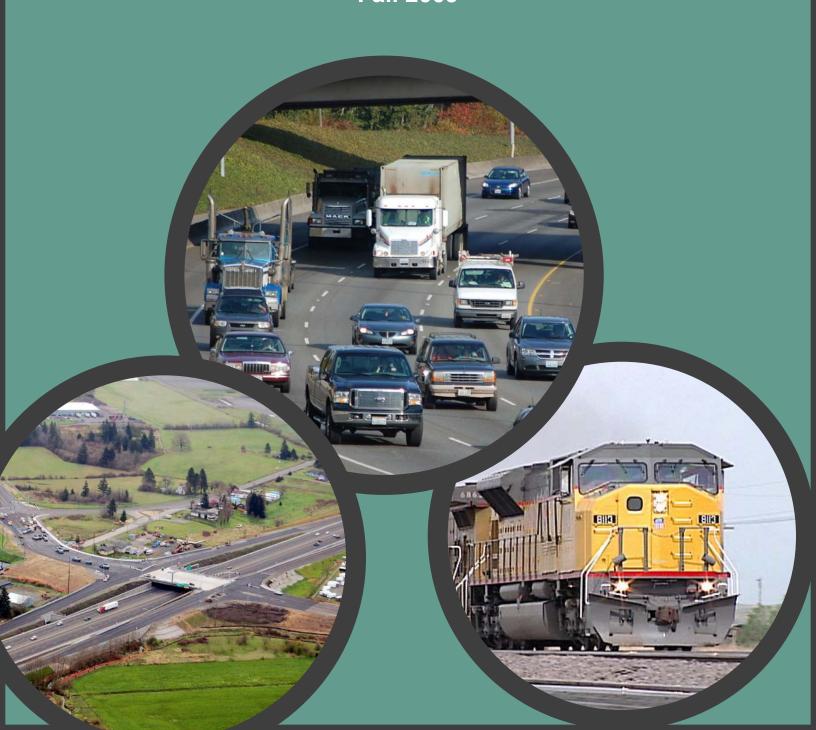


# I-5 / North Lewis County Interchange Feasibility Study

WSDOT
Southwest Region Design Office
Fall 2009



#### **PREFACE**

The purpose of this report is to determine the feasibility of a new interchange on I-5 in north Lewis or south Thurston County. Although it is technically possible to get approval for a new interchange on the Interstate System (e.g. the new interchange at LaBree Road on I-5 in Lewis County), approval is rarely given.

As outlined is this paper, obtaining approval for a new interchange on the interstate requires one to go through a very laborious federal process. In August of 2009, the Federal Highway Administration provided a revised policy statement through the Federal Register clarifying the requirements for justification and documentation for a new, or modification to, an existing interchange on the Interstate System (see *Appendix G: FWHA Revised Policy Statement*). The federal government takes any access changes to the Interstate System very seriously and notes in the guidance that "it is in the national interest to preserve and enhance the Interstate System." The number and frequency of access connections directly affects the operation and safety of the Interstate System. A substantial level of effort is therefore required to address federal policy associated with new and revised interchange justifications to the Interstate System, regardless of the outcome.

Where this report concludes a new interchange is possible, it does not conclude it is highly likely to be endorsed at the federal level. There are a number of actions that the local agencies can take to increase the chance of getting a new interchange approved. Conversely, there are some actions the local agencies can take that may decrease the likelihood of getting a new interchange approved. This study describes some of these potential actions. Moreover, the study describes the federal approval process which is purposefully structured to be comprehensive and extensive with the intent of protecting the local and national economy.

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#### **Executive Summary**

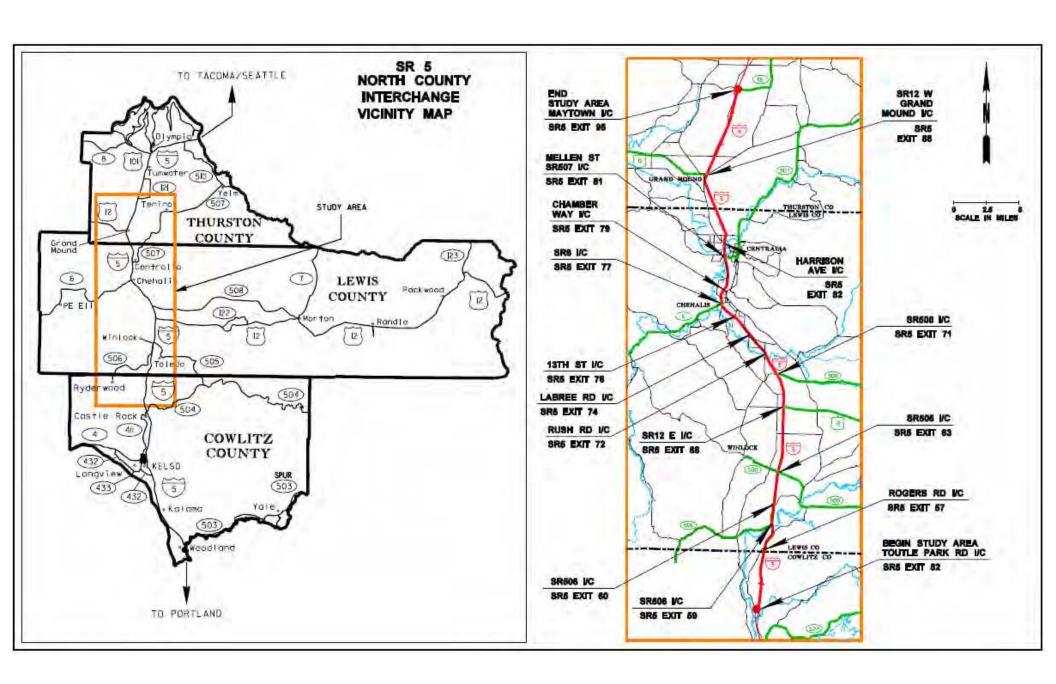
In 2008, the Washington State Legislature's Engrossed Substitute House Bill 2878, Section 221.(10) appropriated "\$80,000 of the motor vehicle account to study the feasibility of a new interchange on Interstate 5 between the city of Rochester and Harrison Avenue". The Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) conducted this feasibility study for a new interchange located along the Interstate 5 (I-5) corridor between the existing Harrison Avenue Interchange (Exit 82.0) and Grand Mound Interchange (Exit 88.0) (See vicinity map on page 3.).

Beyond the I-5 limits mentioned above, regionally significant considerations need to be assessed to fully explore the feasibility of a new interchange in north Lewis County or south Thurston County. To date, the feasibility study has solicited and incorporated Federal, State, Tribal and Local visions, guidelines, and criterion.

A study committee was convened with representatives from Cowlitz, Lewis and Thurston Counties (See Appendix A for the list of committee attendees). Through study meetings WSDOT solicited input and communicated the Federal and State processes for the feasibility of a new interchange.

With the funds provided, this study focused on gathering existing data and considerations surrounding a new interchange. Identification of a preferred location, preliminary design and traffic modeling was beyond the funds available. Alternatively, this study focused on gathering and reporting on information regarding; 1) Existing transportation system, 2) Current and planned transportation projects, 3) Existing and future land use, zoning and developments, and 4) Federal and State perspective and processes regarding new interstate interchanges.

Based on the information reviewed as part of this Feasibility Study, there appears to be sufficient need and supporting data to warrant further consideration. The next step would include preliminary engineering, traffic analysis and an environmental review sufficient to complete an Interchange Justification Report (IJR) for a new interchange through WSDOT and the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA). However, it is not a foregone conclusion that both WSDOT and FHWA would approve a new interchange on Interstate 5 in this area.



#### **Section 1: References and Background Information**

As part of this effort, WSDOT identified the study area's current land use and reviewed the local governments' long-term plans and visions. This includes identifying the anticipated developments in the area, the most recent updates to County and City zoning plans, and proposed expansions of Urban Growth Areas (UGA).

Through local agency coordination, staff research and meetings, local transportation and comprehensive plan information was obtained from Lewis County, Thurston County, Cowlitz County, Port of Centralia, and the Confederated Tribes of the Chehalis as well as the cities of Centralia, Chehalis, and Grand Mound. In all, WSDOT reviewed sixteen Comprehensive Plans and technical reports published from 1998 to 2008.

Additionally, WSDOT staff solicited input from surrounding businesses to better understand community issues and how they contribute to the transportation system.

Table 1: Local Businesses with Operations Significant to Transportation System lists the local businesses contacted or researched by WSDOT staff as part of the Feasibility Study. Moreover, Appendix E: Zoning and Boundary Map identifies the approximate locations of businesses list below.

Table 1: Local Businesses with Operations Significant to Transportation System			
* Michaels Distribution Center	Trans Alta		
Lowe's Distribution Center	Confederated Tribes of the Chehalis –		
	Great Wolf Resort		
* Scot Industries	LeMay Co.		
* The Port of Centralia	Symons Frozen Foods Inc.		
* Tarragon Centralia NW	Lakeside Industries		
Opus NW	Sierra Pacific Industries		
(*) Located on Port of Centralia property			

Staff researched other documents such as The Washington State Transportation Plan, Local Impact analysis, and Master Plans. These plans cover I-5 from Toutle Park at Exit 52 to Maytown at Exit 95. Below is a report list of studies referenced (Table 2).

**Table 2: List of Studies Referenced** 

North County Interchange Feasibility Study Report List			
Report Title	Location/Milepost	Details	Year
Washington's Transportation			
Plan			2008/2026
Grand mound Sub area Plan	Grand Mound		Rev. 2006
Grand Mound UGA Map	Grand Mound		2006
I-5 Grand Mound Interchange - Stage 2 Traffic Analysis and Executive Summary		Electronic	2008
Web Page info sheet	OPUS Logistics, Centralia	77 Acres	N/A
Port of Centralia Industrial Parks Master Plan	Port of Centralia		Rev. 2006
Lewis County Comprehensive Plan (Not Complete)	Lewis County		2001
Lewis County Official Zoning Map and Key Codes	Lewis County-North County Interchange MP 84.65		1998
SR 507 Connector Corridor Study			2000
Interstate 5 Access Request			1999
I-5 Toutle Park Road to Maytown	Final EIS		2003
Centralia UGA Map		Outdated by GIS data	2005
Thurston County Comprehensive Plan			2008
Thurston Co. Comp Plan		Electronic	2008
Thurston Co. Buildable Lands Report		Electronic	2007
Thurston Regional Trails Plan		Electronic	
Existing Conditions and Possible Future Trends Report	Tribes/Grand Mound	Grand Mound 10 year Development Plan	2008
Centralia Comprehensive Plan			2007
Longview-Kelso-Rainier MPO Area Metropolitan Transportation Plan		This Includes Lewis County	2003
Transportation Impact Analysis	Great Wolf Lodge		2006
•	Other Data	l .	1
Letter from Bill Lotto, former Executive Director of Economic Development Council	Trans Alta NE Lewis County	14000 Acres Possible Ind. Use	2008
Project Flier	Grand Mound Interchange WSDOT Project		2007

Huett-Zollars/TransAlta Info	Trans Alta NE Lewis	1000 Acre	2008
Request	County	Development	
Web Page info sheet	Symons Frozen Foods Inc.	235 Acres Agg. 35 Acres Ind. 50-75 trucks per day	2008

#### **Section 2: Existing Transportation Infrastructure**

Section 2 describes the existing conditions of the interstate system, the non-interstate highway and local transportation system. 'Appendix B – Existing Transportation Infrastructure' contains a map identifying the existing transportation system.

#### Section 2.1: Interstate Highway System

#### I-5 Mainline

I-5 is the most significant freight freeway on the West Coast, linking markets in Canada, the United States and Mexico and is critical to the regional, state and national economy. It is also the busiest commuter roadway in western Washington. Currently, a 40-mile long section of I-5 is only two lanes in each direction - from the Toutle River Safety Rest Area in Cowlitz County to the Maytown interchange in Thurston County.

This Feasibility Study focused on the northern end of this 4-lane, median separated 40 mile section of the I-5 corridor which crosses from North Lewis County into South Thurston County. WSDOT State Highway Log classifies this section of I-5 as urban. The current average daily traffic (ADT) for the I-5 mainline in the Chehalis/Centralia area is approximately 60,000 vehicles per day. In 2035, the ADT along this section of the I-5 corridor in projected to exceed 90,000 vehicles per day.

Currently, WSDOT is advancing a series of improvements along this section of the I-5 corridor. Please see *'Section 3: Planned State and Local Improvements'* and *'Appendix C – Funded WSDOT Projects'* of this report for a more detailed description of these improvements.

#### Mellen Street Interchange (Exit 81)

The Mellen Street Interchange is a diamond interchange with nonstandard geometric characteristics. The interchange consists of single lane on- and off-ramps with signalized ramp terminals. The portion of Mellen Street extending east of I-5 is SR 507. This is an east-west, 2-lane urban minor arterial transporting traffic between downtown Centralia and western Centralia with two lanes passing under I-5. There is currently no parking on Mellen Street and the posted speed limit is 30 mph. On the west side of I-5 is the Centralia Hospital and on the east side closer to downtown, is the Centralia Community College.

#### **Harrison Avenue Interchange (Exit 82)**

The Harrison Avenue Interchange is a diamond-type interchange within the City of Centralia and is the northern most interchange in Lewis County. This interchange consists of single lane on- and off-ramps with up to three lanes at the signalized ramp terminals. This interchange is less than one mile to the north of the Mellen Street Interchange creating a problematic weaving condition between the two interchanges.

The Harrison Avenue Interchange is a major access point to the interstate system for the northern portion of the City of Centralia. Immediately adjacent to I-5, Harrison Avenue is an east-west 5 lane (2 through lanes each way with a two-way-left-turn lane) collector. Much of the City's commercial development is located in close proximity to the interchange. Moreover, the Harrison Avenue Interchange constitutes the most viable access point to I-5 for the industrial operations located on Port of Centralia properties in northern Lewis County and the BNSF rail yard.

#### Grand Mound Interchange/ US 12 W (Exit 88)

The Grand Mound Interchange is the southern most interchange in Thurston County. The section of I-5 mainline at Grand Mound is two lanes in each direction separated by cable barrier. US 12 classification is rural, and the terrain is rolling. The section of US-12 is a two-lane, two-way limited access roadway. Two bridges carry US-12 over I-5 and the Tacoma Rail Mountain Division (TRMD) railroad tracks which run parallel to and west of I-5.

The Grand Mound Interchange located six miles north of the Harrison Avenue Interchange, is the primary access to I-5 for the surrounding communities including the Confederated Tribe of the Chehalis' Great Wolf Resort.

#### Section 2.2: Non-Interstate Transportation System

The following is a description of the existing non-interstate and local transportation infrastructure that provides connectivity between local communities and regions aside from mainline I-5. A summary of the following discussion is located at the end of this section in *'Table 3: Non-Interstate Transportation System'*.

#### **US 12**

US 12 is a rural two lane highway that runs from the Grand Mound Interchange (Exit 88) west to Aberdeen. It should be noted, US 12 shares I-5, from Exit 88 south to exit 68 where it continues east to Morton and Yakima.

#### **SR 507**

SR 507 is a major two lane collector highway that extends northeast from I-5 at Mellen St through downtown Centralia, on through to the Tenino area, then east to Yelm and ends at SR 7 in Spanaway. SR 507 is also the main connector to and from the Trans-Alta area to the north east of Centralia, on Old Hanaford Road. For additional information regarding the Trans-Alta area's regional significance, see *'Section 4.3: Land Use and Comprehensive Plans'*.

#### **Local Transportation System**

#### Old Highway 99 / Harrison Avenue

Old Highway 99 is a two lane highway from I-5 in Centralia to Grand Mound and then continues east to Tenino and north to Tumwater. This roadway is a main route utilized by the Port of Centralia's developments to reach the Grand Mound and Harrison Avenue Interchanges on I-5.

Within the City of Centralia's city limits, Old Highway 99 is called Harrison Avenue. As previously described, Harrison Avenue is an east-west 5 lane (2 through lanes each way with a two-way-left-turn lane) collector with an I-5 interchange (The Harrison Avenue Interchange – Exit 82). A substantial amount of the City of Centralia's commercial development is located along Harrison Avenue, with the Harrison Avenue Interchange representing the most viable access to the interstate system. Along this commercial corridor there are multiple intersections and approaches. As such, Harrison Avenue is a highly congested corridor within the City of Centralia.

To fully address the congestion along the Harrison Avenue corridor, a solution may require Harrison Avenue to be widened. The widening of Harrison Avenue would potentially require the acquisition of multiple businesses. Beyond the impacts to local businesses and the community, this action is cost prohibitive.

#### **Jackson Highway**

Jackson Highway is a two lane rural roadway that extends from Toledo to Chehalis on the east side of I-5.

#### Market Boulevard and National Avenue/Kresky Avenue

Traveling from Chehalis to Centralia at Cooks Hill Road near the Mellen Street interchange on I-5, the main local routes on the east side of I-5 are Market Boulevard and National Avenue. Between North Chehalis and South Centralia, National Avenue and Kresky Avenue form a one way couplet.

#### **Airport Road and Scheuber Road**

On the west side of I-5, the main local routes are Airport Road and Scheuber Road. Both of these roadways are two lane facilities. Airport Road is located between I-5 and the Chehalis River, whereas Scheuber Road is located on the west side of the Chehalis River.

Airport Road extends from Chamber Way Interchange (Exit 79) area to Mellen Street Interchange (Exit 81). This roadway is a frontage road for I-5; however, Airport Road goes around Airport Road Dike and does not directly connect Mellen Street to the Airport Commercial Center located near Chamber Way Interchange.

**Table 3: Non-Interstate Transportation System** 

City/Location	North-South Route	
	West of I-5	East of I-5
Winlock/Toledo to Chehalis	Hwy 603	Jackson Hwy.
Chehalis to Centralia	Airport Rd.	Market Blvd.
	Scheuber Rd.	National Ave. /
		Kresky Ave.
Centralia to Grand Mound/Tumwater	Harrison Ave.	SR 507
	Old Hwy 99	Old Hwy 99
		US 12/Littlerock
		Rd. SW

#### Section 2.3: Rail Transportation System

There are several rail lines within the study area that conduct freight operations that should be noted. These railroads are owned and operated by Union Pacific (UP), Burlington Northern Santa Fe (BNSF), Puget Sound and Pacific (PS&P) and Tacoma Rail Mountain Division (TRMD). For additional information regarding the existing rail transportation system, please see 'Section 4.2: Land Use and Comprehensive Plans', 'Appendix B: Existing Transportation Infrastructure' and 'Appendix F: Rail Map'.

#### **Burlington Northern Santa Fe**

Although BNSF owns the second largest rail system in the United States, they constitute the largest freight operator in Washington State. The BNSF rail line extends from Vancouver area in the south through the Cities of Chehalis and Centralia to Seattle/Tacoma and beyond. Within the study area, the BNSF rail line is located on the eastside of the I-5 corridor and connects to the Centralia rail yard. The alignment of the rail line then shifts to the east side of Davis Hill as it continues north, with a spur line to the TransAlta industrial area. See 'Section 4.3: Local Land Use and Comprehensive Plans' for more information on TransAlta.

In addition to freight operations, the BNSF rail line is utilized for passenger rail service. Specifically, there are two passenger trains operated by Amtrak on the BNSF line; the '500 Cascades' and the '14 Coast Starlight'. The '500 Cascades' is a commuter train that operates between Eugene, OR and Vancouver, BC and the '14 Coast Starlight' is a coach train that operates between Los Angeles, CA and Seattle, WA.

#### **Tacoma Rail Mountain Division**

TRMD, owned by the City of Tacoma, is a north-south line that extends from Chehalis to the Port of Tacoma through Grand Mound and Fredrickson. An east leg of TRMD extends from Fredrickson to Morton. Within the City of Centralia, the TRMD rail line is on the east side of the I-5 corridor. It then crosses to the west side of I-5 at Blakeslee Junction, which is located immediately north of the Harrison Avenue Interchange (Exit 82).

As previously mentioned, a new interchange would likely be located between Blakeslee Junction and the Grand Mound Interchange. Within this section of the I-5 corridor, the TRMD rail line is located directly adjacent to the I-5 right-of-way. This close proximity

of the TRMD railroad to I-5 will increase the design and construction cost associated with a new interchange to avoid conflicts between the interchange and the railroad. Potentially, a solution to avoid conflicts between the railroad and a new interchange may incorporate the re-alignment of the TRMD line or the placing of the interchanges cross road and the southbound on/off ramps on a bridge structures.

#### **Puget Sound and Pacific**

The PS&P rail line is an east-west line that extends from the Port of Centralia to the Port of Grays Harbor and Bremerton. PS&P is located on the west side of the I-5 corridor and connects to TRMD rail system at Blakeslee Junction.

#### **Union Pacific**

UP owns and operates the largest rail system in the United States; however, they are not most significant rail operator within this project's study limits. Through operation agreements, UP utilizes a portion of the PS&P line until the Blakeslee Junction and has a spur that continues from Blakeslee Junction west to service the Port of Centralia.

#### **Section 3: Planned State and Local Improvements**

Section 3 describes current WSDOT funded projects and planned local projects identified through outreach with local agencies within the study vicinity.

#### Section 3.1: WSDOT Studies & Funded Projects

As previously mentioned, there currently exists a 40-mile long section of I-5 that is only two lanes in each direction - from the Toutle River Safety Rest Area in Cowlitz County to the Maytown interchange in Thurston County. As a result, congestion is already a problem and even minor incidents can result in significant traffic backups. Safety problems and congestion are expected to grow as traffic volumes increase in the future.

# Studies: I-5 / Toutle Park Road to Maytown Project – Environmental Impact Statement

In 2003, WSDOT completed an Environment Impact Statement (EIS) that assessed impacts associated with proposed improvement along the I-5 corridor between Toutle Park Road Interchange (Exit 52) and the Maytown Interchange (Exit 95). The project corridor was approximately 42.5 miles long and extends from northern Cowlitz County through Lewis County and into Southern Thurston County. The EIS evaluated alternatives for widening the existing four-lane segments of I-5 within the corridor, assessed modifications to multiple interchanges and other improvements to the I-5 corridor.

Labeled a Tier 1 Level EIS, it was recognized that project-specific environmental documentation would be conducted on the individually funded projects. For these projects, WSDOT anticipated setting priorities and developing these improvements over a period of 5 to 20 years. Improvements will be identified as logical individual projects for further design and construction. As such, the 'Funded Projects' of this section describes the improvements to the I-5 corridor that are currently being implemented.

It should be noted, this EIS study did not evaluate impacts associated with a new North County Interchange. As a new North County Interchange did not depend on the widening of the I-5 corridor, it was considered to have independent utility. Therefore, if implemented, a new interchange will be reviewed under separate National Environmental Protection Act (NEPA) and State Environmental Protection Act (SEPA) as an independent action.

#### Funded Projects

WSDOT is moving forward with a series of funded projects to widen mainline I-5 and improve mobility for 18 miles of the aforementioned 40 mile section. The information described below gives an overview of the proposed WSDOT project improvements to the interstate. See 'Appendix C – Funded WSDOT Projects' for a description of these WSDOT projects.

#### I-5/Rush Road to 13<sup>th</sup> Street Project – Widening (Exit 72 to Exit 76)

Construction Advertisement: 2007 Anticipated Completion: 2009

When finished, I-5 from the Rush Road interchange to the 13<sup>th</sup> Street interchange in Lewis County will be a barrier-divided interstate with three general-purpose lanes in each direction (six lanes total). In addition, access to the Chehalis Industrial Park will be improved as a result of building a new interchange at LaBree Road (Exit 74).

#### I-5 / Mellen Street to Blakeslee Junction - (Exit 81 to Exit 82)

Scheduled Construction Advertisement: 2012

Anticipated Completion: 2014

This project will construct Collector / Distributor (CD) lanes between the Mellen Street (Exit 81) and Harrison Avenue (Exit 82) interchanges. The CD lanes will improve safety by eliminating the existing weaving conditions between the Mellen Street and Harrison Avenue interchanges and preserves mobility by keeping local traffic off of mainline I-5.

A new bridge will be constructed over I-5 approximately a quarter of a mile south of the existing Mellen Street Interchange. The new bridge will connect to the existing Mellen Street Interchange and CD lanes using Airport Road and Ellsbury Street. This split interchange configuration will allow traffic to circulate with one direction flow.

Additionally, as part of this project, I-5 will be widened and re-aligned at the Blakeslee Junction curve.

#### I-5 / Blakeslee Junction to Grand Mound - (Exit 82 to Exit 88)

Scheduled Construction Advertisement: 2010

Anticipated Completion: 2012

This project will widen I-5 between the Blakeslee Railroad Junction in Lewis County and just south of the Grand Mound interchange (Exit 88) in Thurston County, to become a barrier-divided interstate with three general-purpose lanes in each direction.

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#### I-5 / Grand Mound to Maytown - (Exit 88 to Exit 95)

Construction Advertisement: 2007 Anticipated Completion: 2009

This project widens mainline I-5 from four to six lanes from the Grand Mound Interchange to the Maytown Interchange and improves the Maytown Interchange.

#### I-5 / Grand Mound Interchange – (Exit 88)

Scheduled Construction Advertisement: 2010

Anticipated Completion: 2012

The Grand Mound Interchange is the location that US-12 meets I-5 from the west and continues on I-5 to exit 68, south of Chehalis. The I-5/Grand Mound Interchange project will reconfigure the interchange into a diamond type interchange in place of the existing half clover leaf type. The US-12 alignment will be shifted to the north of the current location. The profile of US-12 will be raised to provide adequate clearance for I-5 mainline traffic.

Additionally, this project will replace the existing two bridges over I-5 and the railroad bridges to the west of I-5. US-12 will also be widened to two through lanes, with dedicated left turn lanes. Bike lanes and sidewalks will be added in each direction as well. This project will signalized each of the terminals replacing the existing merging conditions. The ramp modifications will include realignment and lengthening of the acceleration and deceleration lanes as well as superelevation adjustments.

#### Section 3.2: Local Projects

The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) requires there be adequate local connectivity to minimize local trips on interstate system. This requirement by FHWA is outlined in more detail in *'Section 4.1 – Federal Perspective and Priority'*. Below is a description of improvements to the local transportation system that will support the need to get local trips off the interstate system.

#### **Louisiana Street Connection to Airport Road**

Scheduled Construction Advertisement: 2012

Anticipated Completion: 2014

As previously mentioned, Airport Road is the west side frontage road for I-5 between the Chamber Way Interchange (Exit 79) and Mellen Street Interchange (Exit 81). However, Airport Road does not directly connect to Chamber Way. This lack of connectivity prompts the traveling public to use I-5 when traveling between Chehalis and Centralia, instead of using Airport Road a frontage route.

This project connects Airport Road to Louisiana Street by crossing over the dike at the north end of the airport (see 'Appendix D – Airport Road Project'). Louisiana Street then connects to Chamber Way. The deficiency is that the Chamber Way Interchange is congested during peak traffic volume hours. Connecting Airport Road to Louisiana Avenue would relieve congestion at the Chamber Way Interchange by allowing traffic accessing the commercial area on the west side of I-5, to use the Mellen Street

Interchange. Moreover, this project will reduce local trips that currently utilize the I-5 corridor when traveling between Centralia and Chehalis.

Although WSDOT is working on designing and constructing the proposed Airport Road connection to Louisiana Street, this project represents a major improvement to the local transportation system that will alleviate traffic from the I-5 corridor. This project establishes a viable non-interstate north-south route by improving local connectivity and helps reduce local trips that currently utilize the I-5 corridor.

#### **Airport Road - Paving**

Lewis County is developing a project to enhance the roadway integrity on Airport Road. This project may include re-building the subsurface and overlaying Airport Road (see 'Appendix D - Airport Road Project'). Additionally, this project may include a path for pedestrians and bicyclists.

#### **Old Highway 99**

Thurston County has joined in an intergovernmental partnership with the Confederated Tribes of the Chehalis Reservation, the Port of Centralia, and the City of Centralia to address transportation issues relating to Thurston County's Grand Mound Urban Growth Area (UGA) and Port of Centralia's development projects in North Lewis County. The Partners are collaborating to plan and fund local improvements to the transportation infrastructure in the Grand Mound/Port of Centralia region. These local improvements will enhance Old Highway 99 as a transportation and freight mobility corridor.

As part of this effort, Thurston County has identified \$2 million for improvements to Old Highway 99 to include center turn lanes and a bridge replacement according to the Regional Transportation Partnership Improvement Plan. These planned improvements are anticipated to move forward when funding is secured. Additionally, as part of the Phased Expansion of the Chehalis Tribes Great Wolf Resort and related development, the ultimate build-out for Old Highway 99 is a five lane facility. Whereby, there are two through lanes in each direction with a two-way left-turn-lane.

#### **Section 4: Land Use**

Section 4 describes the connection between the Federal viewpoint on interchange approval and the Local Agencies' current and planned land use as described in their respective adopted Comprehensive Plans.

#### Section 4.1: Federal Perspective and Priority

Relative to the interstate highway system, one of the highest priorities for the Federal Government is promoting national economic interests by efficiently transporting goods and services to and from major industrial entities, such as distribution centers or manufacturing facilities. From the Federal perspective, this is achieved through region to region movements of these goods and services and not through local trips. These trips should be accommodated through proper local infrastructure as noted below. Developments that generate local trips may be critical to local economies; however, they are not necessarily significant in the broader Federal priority.

Land use dictates the type and frequency of trips utilizing an interchange and, moreover, dictates the origin/destination of those trips relative to the mainline interstate system. Therefore, from the Federal perspective, the issue of Land Use is a critical consideration that may determine if a new interchange or access point to the interstate system will be deemed favorable.

Typically, relative to allocated land area, commercial and residential zoning generates a higher volume of short duration local trips which serve the local economy. These local trips, if centered around an interchange, will utilize the interstate highway system if adequate local transportation infrastructure does not exist. These commercial and residential trips further congest the interstate system and negatively effect the movement of goods and services from region to region, as well as creating safety issues with merge, diverge and weaving impacts. Conversely, industrial zoning typically generates trips associated with movement of goods and services from region to region. Industrial zoning centered on an interchange does introduce traffic onto the interstate highway system. However, this trip type is in alignment with Federal priority of promoting national economic interests.

Commercial and residential areas are vital to local agencies and communities, but FHWA maintains the notion that trips associated with this land use should be served by non-interstate local transportation systems, thus promoting the broader perspective and intended purpose of the Interstate System.

#### Section 4.2: Washington State Perspective and Priority

As previously mentioned, the I-5 corridor is the most significant north/south freeway system on the west cost. The corridor's ability to perform as a reliable link in the movement of people and freight is a critical element of Washington State's economy. As such, preserving and enhancing this asset is of paramount importance to WSDOT and the whole of Washington State.

Although many sections of the I-5 corridor experience congestion and delay, there is a critical four lane section extending between the Cities of Chehalis and Centralia that impairs the effectiveness of the I-5 network. This portion of I-5, extending from 13<sup>th</sup> Street Interchange (Exit 76) to Mellen Street Interchange (Exit 81), is highly congested section of I-5 in Lewis County. Although a project to improvement mobility along this section of highway is not currently funded, this critical section of I-5 represents one the Departments priorities for future projects.

A new interchange located in north Lewis County does not necessarily address or improve the deficiency experienced on I-5 between the 13<sup>th</sup> Street Interchange (Exit 76) to Mellen Street Interchange (Exit 81). As such, from the Department's perspective, addressing the needs between 13<sup>th</sup> Street and Mellen Street is a higher priority than a new interchange within the study area.

To promote and sustain the functionality of a new interchange and the interstate system, WSDOT would pursue aggressive access control for any new interchange. As a result of this effort, the intersecting cross roads would have no access or highly restrictive access for a significant distance from the interchange.

#### Section 4.3: Local Land Use and Comprehensive Plans

As previously mentioned, a critical consideration for any new interchange along the I-5 corridor is that Local Agencies adopt Land Use. Specifically, any proposed interchange or access to the interstate system would have a higher probability of being approved by FHWA and WSDOT, if Local Agencies have incorporated a substantial allocation industrial zoned land as part of their respective adopted comprehensive plans. The following is a summary of Local Agencies' adopted Land Use.

#### **Lewis County**

Although the main focus of this Feasibility Study is within Lewis County the most probable location for a new interchange is located within the City of Centralia's existing and proposed Urban Growth Boundary (UGB). However, there is a potential large scale industrial development that straddles Northern Lewis and Southern Thurston County, east of the City of Centralia's proposed UGB that should be taken into consideration.

The Trans Alta area is approximately 14,000 acres suitable for long term industrial use which is already provided with many required utility services. This area is the site of a decommissioned coal mine. The coal from this mine originally powered the steam plant currently operating on this site which is now powered by off-site coal transported via rail. The water used to as part of the steam plant operations is provided by an on site reservoir.

Much of the TransAlta's 14,000 acres has been logged for forest management. This property is currently a resource for rock and timber products but is suggested to be a future location for an industrial park and/or Port of Centralia expansion. See 'Appendix B: Existing Transportation Infrastructure' for maps that include TransAlta.

#### Thurston County & Confederated Tribes of the Chehalis

As previously mentioned, the community of Grand Mound (a subarea of Thurston County), is located in Southern Thurston County. The 2007 Subarea Plan for Grand Mound designated 362 acres as Planned Industrial. According to the Grand Mound 10-Year Plan, which was initiated by the Confederated Tribes of the Chehalis Reservation, these areas remain largely undeveloped or underdeveloped. According to this plan, an economic and market analysis was conducted and indicated that much of the Planned Industrial area should be designated for commercial, entertainment, or residential land uses. This 10-year business plan includes continual expansion for the Great Wolf Resort, their facilities and enhancements to local transportation infrastructure. This continual expansion by the Chehalis Tribe that is progressing with support from the local community will result in a shift towards commercial and residential oriented Land Use in Southern Thurston County.

Access to the interstate system for this existing and planned development is provided by the Grand Mound Interchange (Exit 88). As such, the traffic volumes generated by these commercial and residential developments is anticipated to have a minimal influence on a new North Lewis County Interchange, provided the land use around a new North County Interchange is freight oriented.

#### City of Centralia

The City of Centralia's Comprehensive Plan identifies two main industrial land use districts. The largest of these districts is located north-west of the Harrison Avenue Interchange (Exit 82). The Port of Centralia's properties and numerous other existing industrial developments are located within this district (see 'Appendix E – Zoning and Boundary Map'). The other, significantly smaller industrial district is a long, narrow strip located east of I-5. The zoning for the above mentioned districts range from Heavy Industrial to Light Industrial.

The City of Centralia has three commercial districts centered at Mellen Street Interchange (Exit 81), Harrison Avenue Interchange (Exit 82) and the downtown corridor. The zoning for these areas allow for central and limited business districts and general commercial. According to the Centralia Comprehensive Plan, the City has seen redevelopment of commercial areas in the past and will continue to focus on the downtown business district as well as the Mellen Street and Harrison Avenue Interchange areas.

According to the City of Centralia's 2007 Comprehensive Plan, "these industrial and commercial land use classifications represent a range of scale and use depending on where they are located and the purpose they serve. Centralia's roots are based in its industrial foundation. Most of the land with an industrial land use classification is located west along the I-5 corridor and outside of the City limits but within the UGA. Seventeen percent (17%) of the land within the UGA is identified for industrial uses, and approximately 83% of that industrial land is vacant. Seventy percent (70%) of the land planned as industrial is for heavy industrial users and of that seventy nine percent (79%) of that is vacant. Thirty percent (30%) is set aside for lighter industrial users of which 86% is vacant. To allow for greater diversity and flexibility of land uses the city zoning allows for retail or commercial uses in the industrial zones" (Centralia 2007 Comprehensive Plan, page 57).

Although retail or commercial uses are allowed within the existing UGA industrial zones, according to the City's Comprehensive Plan only nine percent (9%) of the land within the UGA is planned to be commercial uses. These commercial lands will be comprised of smaller, residual parcels that were not incorporated as part of larger industrial acquisitions and spread throughout the entire industrial district.

As noted, the City of Centralia is promoting industrial growth. A key component of existing transportation infrastructure that could further support industrial developments in the areas west of I-5 are the PS&P and TRMD rail lines. As previously stated, these rail lines extend from the City of Centralia and connect to other Ports and industrial operations throughout northwest Washington and the greater United States rail system.

Beyond the existing rail system, the expansion of industrial developments will require the improvement of the city infrastructure and improved access to the Interstate. As part of this effort, the City of Centralia has several planned expansions of the Urban Growth Area (UGA) of the area to the north. Currently, the City's northern UGA boundary is west of the I-5 corridor and extends to Thurston County line. One of the planned expansions will push the UGA boundary from the existing western boundary to the Chehalis River. Another UGA expansion is to the east, from I-5 over Davis Hill.

As part of the eastern UGA expansion, the City has been discussing proposed connection from SR 507 to the west over Davis Hill. This would potentially allow traffic associated with the previously mentioned Trans Alta's developments to use the proposed road inlieu of the SR507 corridor. This could be an important connection as it could help facilitate and/or accelerate the growth of this area.

It should be noted that Davis Hill is a steep, heavily wooded area located on the east side of I-5, north of Harrison Avenue Interchange (Exit 82). Beneath Davis Hill area, there are several abandoned coal mines. The steep, unstable slopes coupled with the existence of abandoned coal mines, render expansive commercial or dense residential developments to be cost prohibitive and improbable. Moreover, the physical characteristics of the area are not conducive to industrial developments either. As such, this area is currently zoned and is anticipated to remain low density residential. Thus, this area should generate relatively low traffic volumes and constitute minimal impact to a new interchange.

As noted previously, much of the industrial-zoned land along the I-5 corridor in North Lewis County, as identified in the City of Centralia's Comprehensive Plan, is vacant. Also as noted previously, the City of Centralia allows for the changing of industrial zoned land to retail or commercial zoning to promote diversity and flexibility. If a substantial change of zoning from industrial to retail or commercial occurs in the vicinity of a proposed interchange, it would have a substantial impact on the safety and operations of the interstate. As such, this flexibility in zoning is very problematic for WSDOT and FHWA in their determination of acceptability of a new interchange. A major responsibility and focus of both WSDOT and FHWA in the consideration of a new interstate interchange is the safety and operations of the interstate system.

#### **Adjacent Interchanges & Associated Land Use**

For the City of Centralia, the Mellen Street Interchange (Exit 81) and Harrison Avenue Interchange (Exit 82) constitute the most viable access to the I-5 corridor. Therefore, within the City of Centralia, trips to or from the interstate system that are associated with commercial and residential developments typically utilize these interchanges. Similarly, the areas surrounding Grand Mound Interchange (Exit 88) are anticipated to continue to grow as commercial and recreation developments. As such, all of these interchanges will increasingly be utilized for commercial and residential oriented trips.

The Harrison Avenue Interchange (Exit 82) and Grand Mound Interchange (Exit 88) constitute the most viable access to the interstate system for trips associated with the Port of Centralia or other industrial developments in north Lewis County. A new interchange located in the area between these interchanges could act to pull freight or industrial trips from the Harrison Avenue and Grand Mound interchanges. With freight mobility focused at a new interchange, the existing Harrison Avenue and Grand Mound interchanges would experience improved safety and reduced congestion.

#### **Section 5: FHWA/WSDOT Relationship**

Section 5 describes the relationship between Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and State DOT's, as described by the United States Congress. WSDOT is required to protect and enhance the freeway operations by evaluating and improving safety and mobility in accordance with the Federal requirements.

#### Section 5.1: Compliance with Federal Requirements

FHWA is charged with the broad responsibility of ensuring that America's roads and highways continue to be the safest and most technologically up-to-date as reasonably possible. Although State, Local, and Tribal governments own most of the Nation's highways, FHWA provides the financial and technical support for constructing, improving and preserving our highway system. In addition, there is legislation, regulation, and guidance that helps address the many challenges we face on our transportation system today – challenges such as improving safety, reducing traffic congestion, improving efficiency in freight movement, increasing intermodal connectivity, and protecting our environment.

As part of the design process, WSDOT must adhere to rules and regulations it has set forth in order to meet the requirements of the FHWA and to satisfy the environmental requirements. To ensure a project fully satisfies environmental regulations, a new interchange along the interstate system would need to successfully complete both National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) environmental documentation processes. This documentation would assess any project's potential affect to the environment. Additionally, FHWA requires any new interchange to complete an Interchange Justification Report (IJR) describing the safety and mobility impacts in the project vicinity as well as the impacts to the local infrastructure.

FHWA will not formally approve an IJR until NEPA documentation has been approved; however, an IJR can obtain 'conditional approval' prior to completing the NEPA documentation process. It is suggested a new North County Interchange project pursue this conditional approval of the IJR prior to completing the NEPA process. The following is a description of the IJR process.

#### Section 5.2: Interchange Justification Report (IJR) Description & Process

As previously mentioned, Federal law requires FHWA approval of all revisions to the Interstate system, including changes to limited access. Moreover, both FHWA and WSDOT policy require the formal submission of a request to either break or revise the existing limited access on Interstate and State Routes, respectively.

An Interchange Justification Report (IJR) is the document used to request a new access point or access point revision on limited access freeways in Washington State. The IJR is used to document the planning process, the evaluation of the alternatives considered, the design of the preferred alternative, the impacts to the Interstate system and the coordination that supports and justifies the request for an access revision.

#### Interchange Justification Report (IJR) Process and Policy Points

Gaining concurrence and approval for an access point revision is a multistep process. WSDOT Design Manual organizes the process into three main efforts: 1) Organize a support team and conduct study, 2) Conduct the analysis and prepare an IJR, and 3) Submit the IJR for review and approval.

Although all elements included in this process are important, approval for an access point revision is based off of the IJR. An IJR would need to fully address all eight policy points listed below. The most critical are the reasonable alternatives, the operational and accident analyses. Constructing a new interchange will place four new ramps on I-5 which could potentially create four new locations with potential for safety and congestion issues. Following are the eight key policy points for an IJR.

- 1. Need for Access Point Revision
- 2. Reasonable Alternatives
- 3. Operational and Accident Analyses
- 4. Access Connection and Design
- 5. Land use and Transportation Plans
- 6. Future Interchanges
- 7. Coordination
- 8. Environmental Processes

#### **Section 6: Conclusion**

A principal element of the process to establish a new interchange along the interstate system is to successfully complete the IJR process. FHWA retains sole approval authority of the IJR process and, ultimately, any new interchange along the interstate highway system. A critical consideration, from FHWA's perspective, is enhancing safety, preserving mobility along the interstate system and promoting/protecting national economic interests.

Therefore, a critical factor that could influence the outcome of a successful IJR process is Land Use as specified by Local Agency's adopted Comprehensive Plans. As previously mentioned, the City of Centralia is planning to expand the northern UGA boundary to the county limits. Within this expansion, the City's adopted Comprehensive Plan identifies the areas surrounding the logical proximity of a new interchange to be industrial use.

Based on the notion that a new interchange could act to pull freight or industrial oriented trips from Harrison Avenue and Grand Mound interchanges and other information summarized in this brief, there appears to be sufficient need and supporting data to warrant further consideration. As previously mentioned, one of the biggest concerns is the potential change of land use from industrial to commercial or residential and the associated negative impacts to safety and operations of the interstate system. The next step in considering a new interchange would include preliminary engineering, traffic analysis and an environmental review sufficient to complete an Interchange Justification Report (IJR) through WSDOT and the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA). However, it is not a foregone conclusion that both WSDOT and FHWA would approve a new interchange on Interstate 5 in this area.

**Appendix A: Feasibility Study Committee Attendees** 

## I-5 / North County Interchange Feasibility Study Committee Membership

**Lewis County** 

Commissioner Ron Averill Commissioner Lee Gross

John Heustis Bob Johnson John Heinley Barb Kinkaid

Lewis County EDC

Executive Director - Bill Lotto

Rachael Jennings

**Thurston County** 

Commissioner Bob MacLeod

Olivia Terwilleger Forest Sutmiller

**Thurston Regional Council** 

Thera Black

**CTED** 

Valerie Grigg Devis

City of Centralia

City Manager – J.D. Fouts

Ted Shannon

Polo Enriquez

Bob Berg

Jan Stemkoski

Kahle Jennings

**Chehalis Tribes** 

Amy Loudermill Lennea Magnus

Port of Centralia

Kyle Heaton

City of Chehalis

Tim Grochowski

Centralia Community College

Steve Ward

**Business Representative** 

Dale Pullin (Thorbecke's)

Francis J. Wall (Hewitt Zollars)

Carl Stixrood (Hewitt Zollars)

WSDOT

Bart Gernhart

Sharon Zimmerman

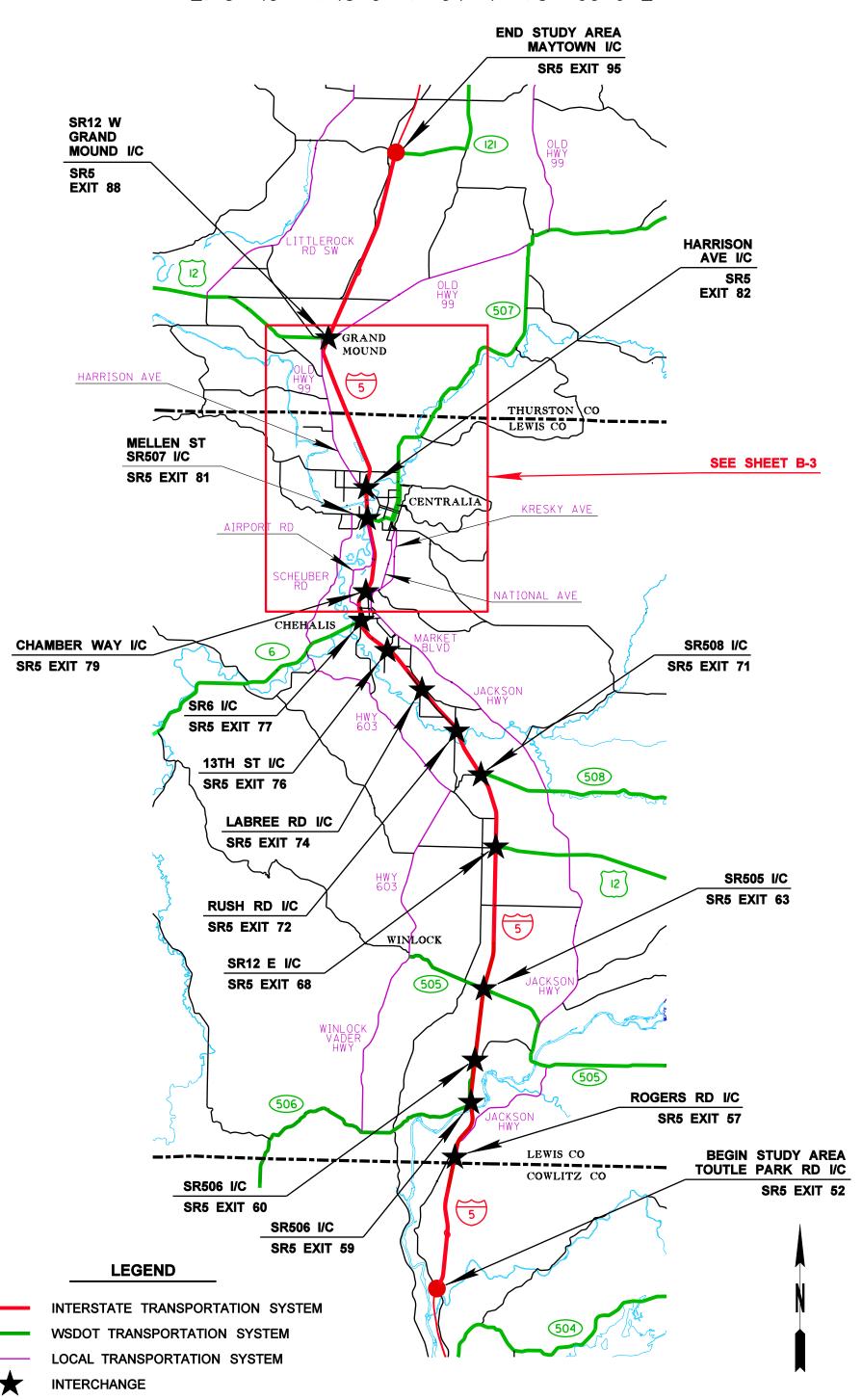
Colin Newell

Kevin Miller

**Appendix B: 'Existing Transportation Infrastructure'** 

# I-5 / NORTH LEWIS COUNTY FEASIBILITY STUDY

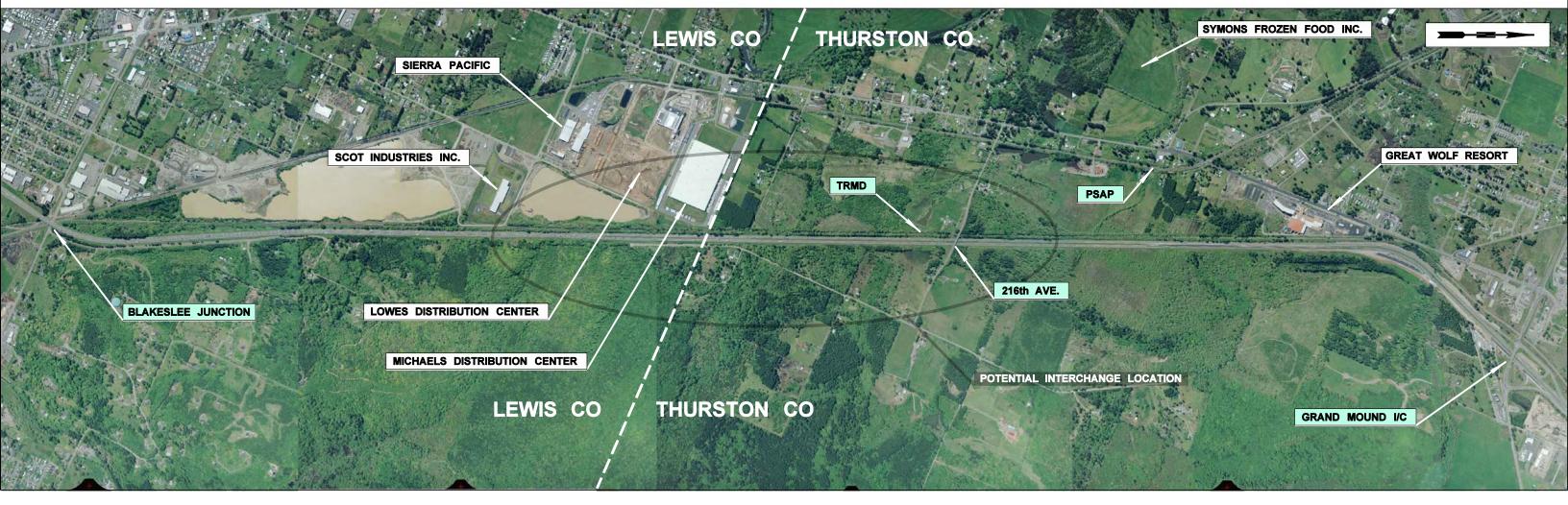
EXISTING TRANSPORTATION INFRASTRUCTURE



## I-5 / NORTH LEWIS COUNTY FEASIBILITY STUDY EXISTING TRANSPORTATION INFRASTRUCTURE TO ABERDEEN TACOMA / **SEE AERIAL PHOTO** GRAND **APPENDIX B4** MOUND **SR12 W** TO SEATTLE **GRAND** MOUND I/C (507 SR5 0L[ HW\ 99 **EXIT 88** THURSTON CO RAILROAD SPUR TO TRANSALTA LEWIS CO HARRISON AVE **HARRISON** AVE I/C SR5 **EXIT 82** CENTRALIA **MELLEN ST** SR507 I/C KRESKY AVE **SR5 EXIT 81** SCHEUBER RD AIRPORT RD NATIONAL AVE CHAMBER WAY I/C TO PORTLAND **LEGEND SR5 EXIT 79** INTERSTATE TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM **RAILROADS** WSDOT TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM PUGET SOUND AND PACIFIC (PSAP) LOCAL TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM TACOMA RAIL MOUNTAIN DIVISION (TRMD) BURLINGTON NORTHERN-SANTA FE (BNSF) **RAILROAD INTERCHANGE** UNION PACIFIC (UP) **B-3**

# APPENDIX B4: NORTH COUNTY INTERCHANGE FEASIBILITY STUDY

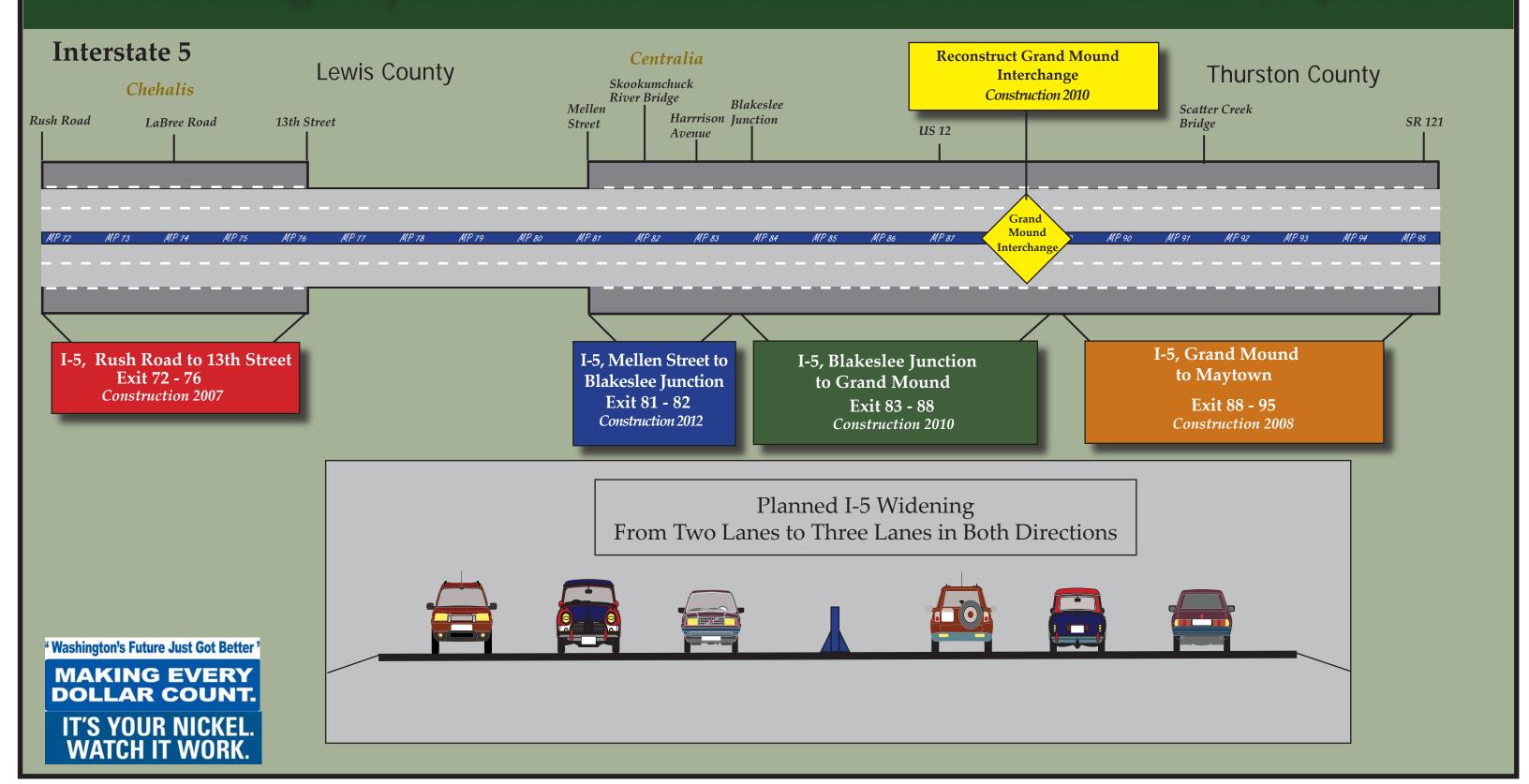




**Appendix C: 'Funded WSDOT Projects'** 



# I-5 Widening Projects in Lewis and Thurston Counties - 18 Miles of Improvements



# I-5 Widening Projects in Lewis and Thurston Counties - 18 Miles of Improvements

# I-5, Rush Road to 13th Street

# I-5, Mellen Street to Blakeslee Junction

# I-5, Blakeslee Junction to Grand Mound

# **Grand Mound Interchange**

# I-5, Grand Mound to Maytown

## **Project Overview**

Four miles of I-5 will be widened from the Rush Road Interchange to 13th Street in Lewis County. This will be a barrier-divided Interstate with three general-purpose lanes in each direction (six lanes total).

A new interchange will be constructed at LaBree Road. This new interchange will improve access to the Chehalis Industrial Park.

This project will improve mobility and safety for all vehicles traveling on this section of I-5.

**Total Funding - \$51 Million Funding Source** - 2003 Nickel:
\$47 Mil., Federal Earmark: \$4
Mil.

**Construction Began** - 2007 **Construction Complete** - 2009

## **Project Overview**

This project will improve approximately three miles of I-5 between the Mellen Street interchange (Exit 81) and the Blakeslee Railroad Junction bridge in Lewis County. One lane will be added in each direction.

Improvements will also be made at the Mellen Street and Harrison Avenue Interchanges.

This project will improve mobility and safety for all vehicles traveling on this section of I-5 as well as improve access to the hospital and college.

Total Funding - \$133 Million Funding Source - 2005 TPA Construction Begins - 2012 Construction Complete - 2014

## **Project Overview**

This project will widen four miles of I-5 between the Blakeslee railroad junction in Lewis County (milepost 83.5) and just south of the Grand Mound interchange (Exit 88) in Thurston County.

This will be a barrier-divided interstate with three general-purpose lanes in each direction.

This project will improve mobility and safety for all vehicles traveling on this section of I-5.

Total Funding - \$63 Million Funding Source - 2005 TPA Construction Begins - 2010 Construction Complete - 2012

## **Project Overview**

This project will improve the function and safety of the Grand Mound Interchange by upgrading the freeway on-ramps and off-ramps to meet current WSDOT and Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) design guidelines.

The project will realign and lengthen on-ramps and off-ramps at the interchange to provide the room required to allow motorists to safely enter and exit the highway.

**Total Funding - \$42.5 Million Funding Source** - 2003 Nickel **Construction Begins** - 2010 **Construction Complete** - 2012

## **Project Overview**

More than eight miles of I-5 will be widened between the Grand Mound and Maytown interchanges. This will be a barrier-divided freeway providing three general-purpose lanes in each direction, where two lanes exist currently.

On-ramps and off-ramps will be improved.

The tight curve south of Grand Mound will be realigned.

This project will improve mobility and safety for all vehicles traveling on this section of I-5.

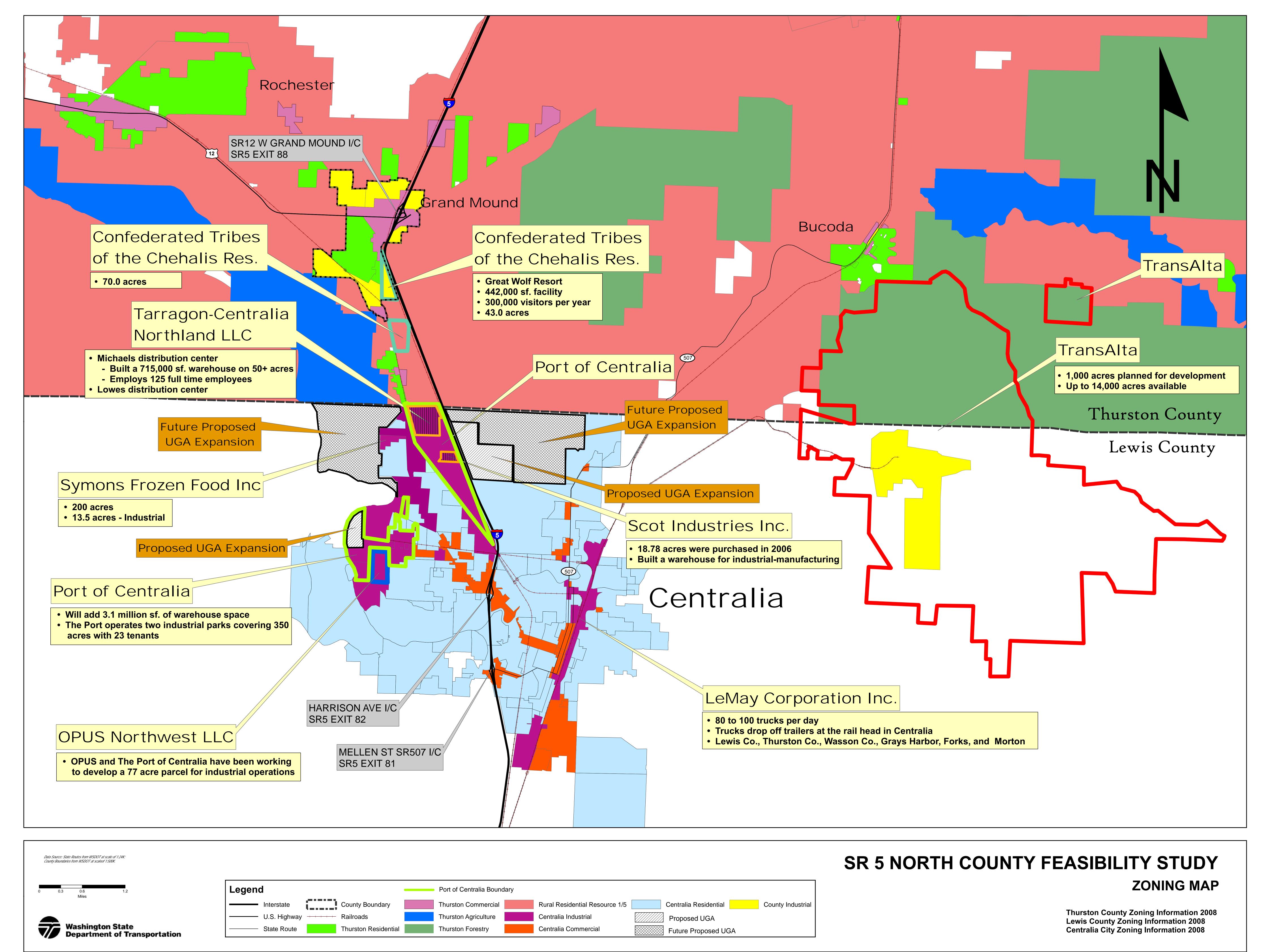
**Total Funding - \$88.5 Million Funding Source -** 2003 Nickel **Construction Began -** 2008 **Construction Complete -** 2010 **Appendix D: Airport Road Project** 



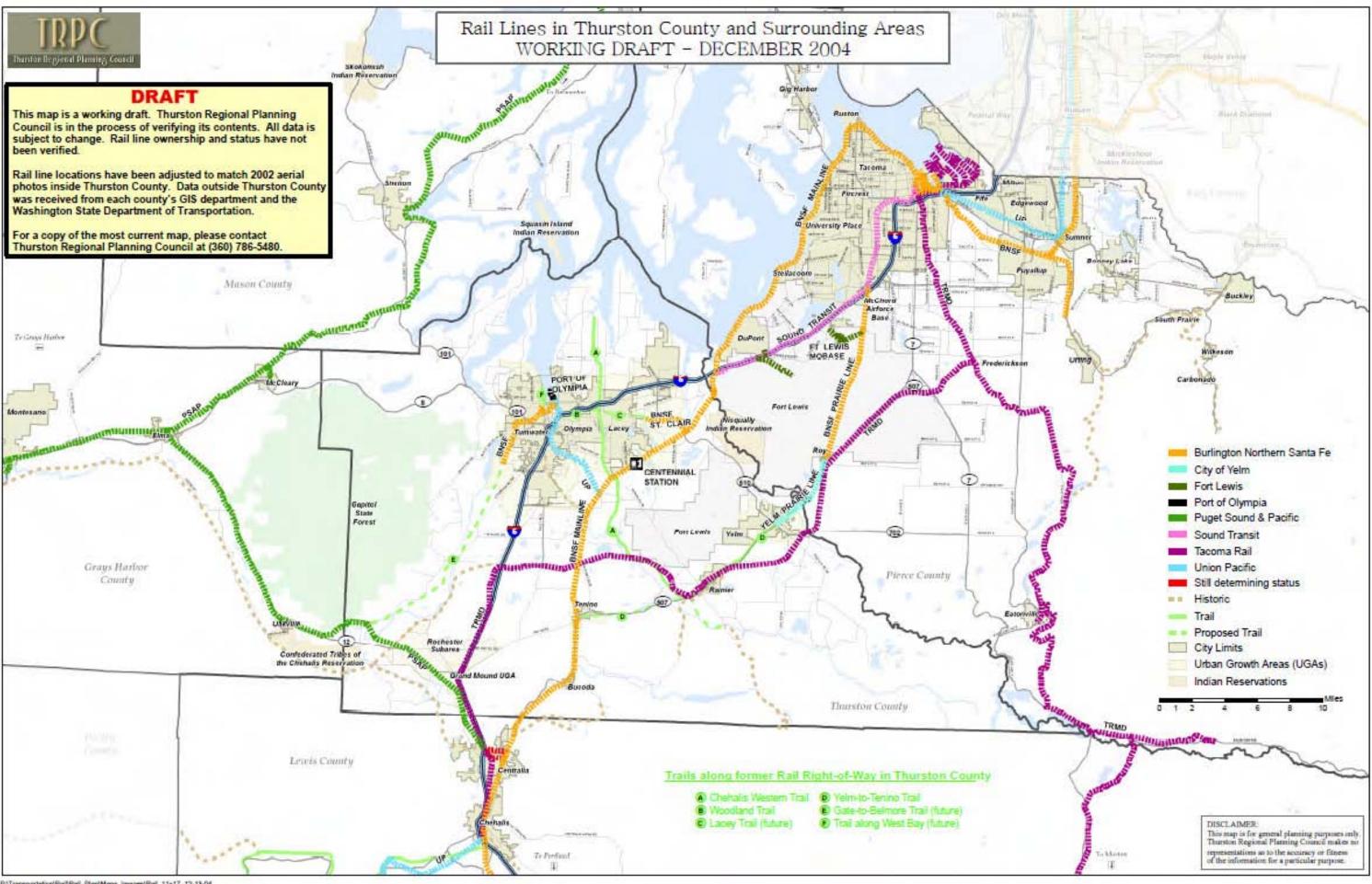
# AIRPORT ROAD POTENTIAL PROJECTS



**Appendix E: Zoning and Boundary Map** 



Appendix F: Rail Map



**Appendix G: FHWA Revised Policy Statement** 

#### **DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION**

#### **Surface Transportation Board**

[STB Docket No. AB-33 (Sub-No. 280X); STB Docket No. AB-1038X); STB Docket No. AB-546X]

Union Pacific Railroad Company— Abandonment Exemption and Discontinuance of Service—in Tarrant County, TX; Fort Worth and Dallas Belt Railroad Company—Discontinuance of Service—in Tarrant County, TX; Fort Worth and Western Railroad Company—Discontinuance of Service—in Tarrant County, TX

On August 7, 2009, Union Pacific Railroad Company (UP), Fort Worth and Dallas Belt Railroad Company (FWDB), and Fort Worth and Western Railroad Company (FWWR) (collectively, petitioners) jointly filed with the Surface Transportation Board (Board) a petition under 49 U.S.C. 10502 for exemption from the provisions of 49 U.S.C. 10903 to permit: (1) UP to abandon and discontinue service over a segment of its North Fort Worth Branch line of railroad between milepost 633.02 and milepost 634.25, a distance of approximately 1.23 miles in Tarrant County, TX; (2) FWDB to discontinue operations over the subject line segment; 1 and (3) FWWR to discontinue overhead and local trackage rights over the subject line segment.<sup>2</sup> The line traverses United States Postal Service Zip Code 76106.3

În addition to an exemption from the prior approval requirements of 49 U.S.C. 10903, petitioners seek exemption from 49 U.S.C. 10904 (offer of financial assistance procedures) and 49 U.S.C. 10905 (public use conditions). Petitioners also seek relief from the trail use provisions of the Board's regulations at 49 CFR 1152.29. In support, petitioners state that the sole purpose of their joint petition is to allow the proposed acquisition of the right-of-way associated with the line segment by the Tarrant Regional Water District for a public flood control and redevelopment project in the north downtown area of Forth Worth, TX, commonly known at

the Trinity Uptown Project. These requests will be addressed in the final decision.

The line does not contain federally granted rights-of-way. Any documentation in petitioners' possession will be made available promptly to those requesting it.

The interest of railroad employees will be protected by the conditions set forth in *Oregon Short Line R. Co.—Abandonment—Goshen*, 360 I.C.C. 91 (1979).

By issuing this notice, the Board is instituting an exemption proceeding pursuant to 49 U.S.C. 10502(b). A final decision will be issued by November 25, 2009.

Any offer of financial assistance (OFA) under 49 CFR 1152.27(b)(2), will be due no later than 10 days after service of a decision granting the petition for exemption. Each OFA must be accompanied by a \$1,500 filing fee. See CFR 1002.2(f)(25).

All interested persons should be aware that, following abandonment of rail service and salvage of the line, the line may be suitable for other public use, including interim trail use. Any request for a public use condition under 49 CFR 1152.28 or for trail use/rail banking under 49 CFR 1152.29 will be due no later than September 16, 2009. Each trail use request must be accompanied by a \$200 filing fee. See 49 CFR 1002.2(f)(27).

All filings in response to this notice must refer to STB Docket No. AB–33 (Sub-No 280X), STB Docket No. 1038X), and STB Docket No.546X, and must be sent to: (1) Surface Transportation Board, 395 E Street, SW., Washington, DC 20423–0001; and (2) Mack H. Shumate, Jr., 101 North Wacker Drive, Room 1920, Chicago, IL 60606, and Paul H. Lamboley, Bank of America Plaza, 50 W. Liberty Street, Suite #645, Reno, NV 89501. Replies to the petition are due on or before September 16, 2009.

Persons seeking further information concerning abandonment or discontinuance procedures may contact the Board's Office of Public Assistance, Governmental Affairs, and Compliance at (202) 245–0238 or refer to the full abandonment or discontinuance regulations at 49 CFR part 1152. Questions concerning environmental issues may be directed to the Board's Section of Environmental Analysis (SEA) at (202) 245–0305. Assistance for the hearing impaired is available through the Federal Information Relay Service (FIRS) at 1–800–877–8339.

An environmental assessment (EA) (or environmental impact statement (EIS), if necessary) prepared by SEA will be served upon all parties of record and upon any agencies or other persons who commented during its preparation. Other interested persons may contact SEA to obtain a copy of the EA (or EIS). EAs in these abandonment proceedings normally will be made available within 60 days of the filing of the petition. The deadline for submission of comments on the EA will generally be within 30 days of its service.

Board decisions and notices are available on our Web site at http://www.stb.dot.gov.

Decided: August 24, 2009.

By the Board, Joseph H. Dettmar, Acting Director, Office of Proceedings.

#### Jeffrey Herzig,

Clearance Clerk.

[FR Doc. E9–20743 Filed 8–26–09; 8:45 am]

#### **DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION**

#### **Federal Highway Administration**

#### Access to the Interstate System

AGENCY: Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), DOT. ACTION: Notice of revised policy statement.

**SUMMARY:** This document issues the revised FHWA policy statement regarding requests for new or modified access points to the Interstate System. The policy includes the requirements for the justification and documentation necessary to substantiate any request that is submitted to FHWA for approval. FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: For technical information: Mr. Jon Obenberger, Office of Program Administration (HIPA-20), (202) 366-2221. For legal information: Mr. Robert Black, Office of the Chief Counsel (HCC-32), (202) 366-1359, Federal Highway Administration, 1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE., Washington, DC 20590. Office hours are from 7:45 a.m. to 4:15 p.m., e.t., Monday through Friday, except Federal holidays. SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

#### **Background**

The surface transportation system plays a key role in shaping the economic health, quality of life and sustainability of a metropolitan area, region, and State. The Interstate System is a critical element providing a network of limited access freeways which facilitate the distribution of virtually all goods and services across the United States. The Interstate System also influences the mobility and safety of people and goods by providing access to local highways and a network of public

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> FWDB operates the line pursuant to a lease with UP. See Fort Worth and Dallas Belt Railroad–Acquisition and Operation Exemption–Certain Lines of St. Louis Southwestern Railway Company, Finance Docket No. 32514 (ICC served June 22,

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> FWDB, a corporate affiliate of FWWR, granted FWWR these trackage rights. See Forth Worth & Western Railroad Company–Trackage Rights Exemption–Forth Worth and Dallas Belt Railroad Company, Finance Docket No. 32590, (ICC served Nov. 10, 1994).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup>Petitioners state that the lease and trackage rights will remain in full force and effect for the remainder of the North Fort Worth Branch.

streets. As a result, it is in the national interest to preserve and enhance the Interstate System to meet the needs of the surface transportation system of the United States for the 21st century.

The FHWA's Policy on Access to the Interstate System provides the requirements for the justification and documentation necessary to substantiate any proposed changes in access to the Interstate System. This policy also facilitates decisionmaking regarding proposed changes in access to the Interstate System in a manner that considers and is consistent with the vision, goals and long-range transportation plans of a metropolitan area, region and State. This policy reflects the congressional intent and direction provided in section 1909(a)(3) of the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU) (Pub. L. 109-59, 119 Stat. 1144), which amended section 101 of title 23, United States Code by adding subsection (b)(3)(H): "the Secretary should take appropriate actions to preserve and enhance the Interstate System to meet the needs of the 21st century.

Section 111 of title 23, United States Code, provides that all agreements between the Secretary and the State departments of transportation (State DOTs) for the construction of projects on the Interstate System shall contain a clause providing that the State will not add any points of access to, or exit from, the project in addition to those approved by the Secretary in the plans for such project, without the prior approval of the Secretary. The Secretary has delegated the authority to administer 23 U.S.C. 111 to the Federal Highway Administrator pursuant to 49 CFR 1.48(b)(1). A formal policy statement including guidance for justifying and documenting the need for additional access to the existing sections of the Interstate System was published in the Federal Register on October 22, 1990 (55 FR 42670), and modified on February 11, 1998 (63 FR 7045).

The FHWA has adopted the AASHTO publication "A Policy on Design Standards—Interstate System" as the standard for projects on the Interstate System as incorporated by reference at 23 CFR 625.4(a)(2). Section 625.4(a)(2) further requires that access to the Interstate System shall be fully controlled, and that access to the Interstate System shall be achieved by interchanges at selected public highways.

#### **Summary of Changes**

The changes in FHWA's policy were made to reflect the direction provided in

SAFETEA-LU, to clarify the operational and safety analysis and assessment of impacts that provides the basis for proposed changes in access to the Interstate System, and to update language at various locations to reference Federal laws, regulations, and FHWA policies. The following specific revisions have been made to the existing policy statement:

1. Updates were made to Requirement 1 clarifying the need for agencies to analyze and justify that the projected design-year traffic demands cannot be adequately accommodated by existing access to the Interstate.

2. Additional examples were added to Requirement 2 to identify the type of improvements to be considered in the planning for and development of proposed changes in access.

3. Text was added to Requirement 3 to clarify that the safety and operational analysis to be performed and documentation to be submitted provide the justification for proposed changes in access.

(4. Revisions were made to Requirement 4 clarifying the need to meet or exceed design standards for all roadway improvements included in proposals to change access.

5. Changes were made to Requirement 5 to reference the current requirements contained in SAFETEA-LU and 23 CFR part 450.

6. Text was added to Requirement 6 clarifying the analysis to be performed in support of proposed changes in access involving multiple interchanges.

7. Clarification to Requirement 7 was made identifying the justification needed to support any proposed change in access due to changes in land use or density of development.

8. Revision was made to Requirement 8 to clarify and avoid duplication with Requirement 5.

9. Updates were made to the Application section to reference current Federal laws, regulations, and FHWA policies. Revisions were made to paragraph 4 and a new paragraph 5 was added to clarify what is a change in access and how this policy may apply to different types of access changes. Paragraph 8 was added to clarify how FHWA's review and approval of proposed changes in access relate to other Federal actions, reviews, and approvals. Paragraph 9 was added to clarify that proposals for changes in access need to be reevaluated and the proposal resubmitted to FHWA for review and approval if the project has not proceeded to construction within 8 vears.

The revised policy statement also includes various editorial changes to

enhance clarity and readability. The revised policy statement is as follows:

#### **Policy**

It is in the national interest to preserve and enhance the Interstate System to meet the needs of the 21st Century by assuring that it provides the highest level of service in terms of safety and mobility. Full control of access along the Interstate mainline and ramps, along with control of access on the crossroad at interchanges, is critical to providing such service. Therefore, FHWA's decision to approve new or revised access points to the Interstate System must be supported by substantiated information justifying and documenting that decision. The FHWA's decision to approve a request is dependent on the proposal satisfying and documenting the following requirements.

#### **Considerations and Requirements**

1. The need being addressed by the request cannot be adequately satisfied by existing interchanges to the Interstate, and/or local roads and streets in the corridor can neither provide the desired access, nor can they be reasonably improved (such as access control along surface streets, improving traffic control, modifying ramp terminals and intersections, adding turn bays or lengthening storage) to satisfactorily accommodate the design-year traffic demands (23 CFR 625.2(a)).

2. The need being addressed by the request cannot be adequately satisfied by reasonable transportation system management (such as ramp metering, mass transit, and HOV facilities), geometric design, and alternative improvements to the Interstate without the proposed change(s) in access (23 CFR 625.2(a)).

3. An operational and safety analysis has concluded that the proposed change in access does not have a significant adverse impact on the safety and operation of the Interstate facility (which includes mainline lanes, existing, new, or modified ramps, ramp intersections with crossroad) or on the local street network based on both the current and the planned future traffic projections. The analysis shall, particularly in urbanized areas, include at least the first adjacent existing or proposed interchange on either side of the proposed change in access (23 CFR) 625.2(a), 655.603(d) and 771.111(f)). The crossroads and the local street network, to at least the first major intersection on either side of the proposed change in access, shall be included in this analysis to the extent necessary to fully evaluate the safety and operational impacts that

the proposed change in access and other transportation improvements may have on the local street network (23 CFR 625.2(a) and 655.603(d)). Requests for a proposed change in access must include a description and assessment of the impacts and ability of the proposed changes to safely and efficiently collect, distribute and accommodate traffic on the Interstate facility, ramps, intersection of ramps with crossroad, and local street network (23 CFR) 625.2(a) and 655.603(d)). Each request must also include a conceptual plan of the type and location of the signs proposed to support each design alternative (23 U.S.C. 109(d) and 23 CFR 655.603(d)).

4. The proposed access connects to a public road only and will provide for all traffic movements. Less than "full interchanges" may be considered on a case-by-case basis for applications requiring special access for managed lanes (e.g., transit, HOVs, HOT lanes) or park and ride lots. The proposed access will be designed to meet or exceed current standards (23 CFR 625.2(a), 625.4(a)(2), and 655.603(d)).

5. The proposal considers and is consistent with local and regional land use and transportation plans. Prior to receiving final approval, all requests for new or revised access must be included in an adopted Metropolitan Transportation Plan, in the adopted Statewide or Metropolitan Transportation Improvement Program (STIP or TIP), and the Congestion Management Process within transportation management areas, as appropriate, and as specified in 23 CFR part 450, and the transportation conformity requirements of 40 CFR parts 51 and 93.

6. In corridors where the potential exists for future multiple interchange additions, a comprehensive corridor or network study must accompany all requests for new or revised access with recommendations that address all of the proposed and desired access changes within the context of a longer-range system or network plan (23 U.S.C. 109(d), 23 CFR 625.2(a), 655.603(d), and 771.111).

7. When a new or revised access point is due to a new, expanded, or substantial change in current or planned future development or land use, requests must demonstrate appropriate coordination has occurred between the development and any proposed transportation system improvements (23 CFR 625.2(a) and 655.603(d)). The request must describe the commitments agreed upon to assure adequate collection and dispersion of the traffic resulting from the development with the

adjoining local street network and Interstate access point (23 CFR 625.2(a) and 655.603(d)).

8. The proposal can be expected to be included as an alternative in the required environmental evaluation, review and processing. The proposal should include supporting information and current status of the environmental processing (23 CFR 771.111).

#### **Application**

This policy is applicable to new or revised access points to existing Interstate facilities regardless of the funding of the original construction or regardless of the funding for the new access points. This includes routes incorporated into the Interstate System under the provisions of 23 U.S.C. 103(c)(4)(A) or other legislation.

Routes approved as a future part of the Interstate System under 23 U.S.C. 103(c)(4)(B) represent a special case because they are not yet a part of the Interstate System. Since the intention to add the route to the Interstate System has been formalized by agreement, any proposed new or significant changes in access beyond those covered in the agreement, regardless of funding, must be approved by FHWA.

This policy is not applicable to toll roads incorporated into the Interstate System, except for segments where Federal funds have been expended or these funds will be used for roadway improvements, or where the toll road section has been added to the Interstate System under the provisions of 23 U.S.C. 103(c)(4)(A). The term "segment" is defined as the project limits described in the Federal-aid project agreement.

Each break in the control of access to the Interstate System right-of-way is considered to be an access point. For the purpose of applying this policy, each entrance or exit point, including "locked gate" access, is considered to be an access point. For example, a diamond interchange configuration has four access points.

Ramps providing access to rest areas, information centers, and weigh stations within the Interstate controlled access are not considered access points for the purpose of applying this policy. These facilities shall be accessible to vehicles only to and from the Interstate System. Access to or from these facilities and local roads and adjoining property is prohibited. The only allowed exception is for access to adjacent publicly owned conservation and recreation areas, if access to these areas is only available through the rest area, as allowed under 23 CFR 752.5(d).

Generally, any change in the design of an existing access point is considered a

change to the interchange configuration, even though the number of actual points of access may not change. For example, replacing one of the direct ramps of a diamond interchange with a loop, or changing a cloverleaf interchange into a fully directional interchange would be considered revised access for the purpose of applying this policy.

All requests for new or revised access points on completed Interstate highways must closely adhere to the planning and environmental review processes as required in 23 CFR parts 450 and 771. The FHWA approval constitutes a Federal action and, as such, requires that the transportation planning, conformity, congestion management process, and the National Environmental Policy Act procedures be followed and their requirements satisfied. This means the final FHWA approval of requests for new or revised access cannot precede the completion of these processes or necessary actions.

To offer maximum flexibility, however, any proposed change in access can be submitted by a State DOT to the FHWA Division Office for a determination of engineering and operational acceptability. This flexibility allows agencies the option of obtaining this acceptability determination prior to making the required modifications to the Transportation Plan, performing any required conformity analysis, and completing the environmental review and approval process. In this manner, State DOTs can determine if a proposal is acceptable for inclusion as an alternative in the environmental process. This policy in no way alters the planning, conformity or environmental review and approval procedures as contained in 23 CFR parts 450 and 771, and 40 CFR parts 51 and 93.

An affirmative determination by FHWA of engineering and operational acceptability for proposals for new or revised access points to the Interstate System should be reevaluated whenever a significant change in conditions occurs (e.g., land use, traffic volumes, roadway configuration or design, environmental commitments). Proposals shall be reevaluated if the project has not progressed to construction within 8 years of receiving an affirmative determination of engineering and operational acceptability (23 CFR) 625.2(a)). If the project is not constructed within this time period, an updated justification report based on current and projected future conditions must be submitted to FHWA to receive either an affirmative determination of engineering and operational acceptability, or final approval if all

other requirements have been satisfied (23 U.S.C. 111, 23 CFR 625.2(a), and 23 CFR 771.129).

#### **Implementation**

State DOTs are required to submit requests for proposed changes in access to their FHWA Division Office for review and action under 23 U.S.C. 106 and 111, and 23 CFR 625.2(a). The FHWA Division Office will ensure that all requests for changes in access contain sufficient information, as required in this policy, to allow FHWA to independently evaluate and act on the request. Guidance to assist with the implementation and consistent application of this policy can be accessed electronically through the FHWA Office of Infrastructure's Web page at: http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/ programadmin/index.htm.

#### **Policy Statement Impact**

The policy statement, first published in the Federal Register on October 22, 1990 (55 FR 42670), and modified on February 11, 1998 (63 FR 7045), describes the justification and documentation needed for requests to add or revise access to the existing Interstate System.

The revisions made by the publication of this policy statement reflect the direction provided in SAFETEA-LU, clarify the operational and safety analysis to accompany proposed changes in access on the Interstate System, and update language at various locations to ensure consistency with other Federal laws, regulations and FHWA policies. State DOTs should take these factors into consideration when making requests for new or revised access points, but the overall effort necessary for developing the request will not be significantly increased.

(Authority: 23 U.S.C. 111 and 315; 49 CFR 1.48)

Issued on August 18, 2009.

#### Victor M. Mendez,

Federal Highway Administrator.

[FR Doc. E9-20679 Filed 8-26-09; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 4910-22-P

#### **DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION**

#### **Surface Transportation Board**

[STB Finance Docket No. 34936]

Port of Moses Lake—Construction Exemption—Moses Lake, WA [STB Finance Docket No. 34936 (Sub-No. 1)]; Port of Moses Lake—Acquisition Exemption—Moses Lake, WA

**AGENCY:** Surface Transportation Board, Department of Transportation.

**ACTION:** Notice of exemption.

**SUMMARY:** Subject to a Programmatic Agreement negotiated by the parties and environmental mitigation measures, the Board is granting exemptions under 49 U.S.C. 10502 from the prior approval requirements of 49 U.S.C. 10901 for the Port of Moses Lake (Port) in STB Finance Docket No. 34936 to construct two segments of rail line in Moses Lake, WA, one between the community of Wheeler and Parker Horn at the mouth of Crab Creek and another between Columbia Basin Railroad Company, Inc. (CBRW) trackage and the east side of the Grant County International Airport, and in STB Finance Docket No. 34936 (Sub-No. 1) to acquire a segment of rail line from CBRW that runs approximately from Parker Horn near Stratford Road to near the Grant County International Airport, which would connect the newly constructed segments. The Port plans to rehabilitate and upgrade this line segment, including the upgrade of two signalized grade crossings. The Port estimates the total mileage of its construction and acquisition proposals to be approximately 11.5 miles in length.

**DATES:** The exemption will be effective on September 11, 2009. Petitions to reopen must be filed by September 16, 2009.

ADDRESSES: An original and 10 copies of all pleadings, referring to STB Finance Docket No. 34936 and STB Finance Docket No. 34936 (Sub-No. 1), must be filed with the Surface Transportation Board, 395 E Street, SW., Washington, DC 20423–0001. In addition, one copy of all pleadings must be served on petitioner's representative: Adrian L. Steel, Jr., Mayer Brown LLP, 1909 K Street, NW., Washington, DC 20006.

#### FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

Joseph H. Dettmar, (202) 245–0395. Assistance for the hearing impaired is available through the Federal Information Relay Service (FIRS) at 1–800–877–8339.

#### SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Additional information is contained in the Board's decision. Board decisions and notices are available on our Web site at http://www.stb.dot.gov.

Decided: August 21, 2009.

By the Board, Chairman Elliott, Vice Chairman Nottingham, and Commissioner Mulvey.

#### Jeffrey Herzig,

Clearance Clerk.

[FR Doc. E9–20666 Filed 8–26–09; 8:45 am] **BILLING CODE 4915–01–P** 

#### **DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION**

#### **Federal Aviation Administration**

Westfield-Barnes Airport, Westfield MA; FAA Approval of Noise Compatibility Program

**AGENCY:** Federal Aviation Administration, DOT.

**ACTION:** Notice.

**SUMMARY:** The Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) announces its findings on the noise compatibility program submitted by the Westfield Airport Commission under the provisions of Title I of the Aviation Safety and Noise Abatement Act of 1979 (Pub. L. 96-193) and 14 CFR part 150. These findings are made in recognition of the description of federal and nonfederal responsibilities in Senate Report No. 96-52 (1980). On August 3, 2009, the Airports Division Manager approved the Westfield-Barnes Airport noise compatibility program. All of the proposed program elements were approved.

**DATES:** Effective Date: The effective date of the FAA's approval of the Westfield-Barnes Airport noise compatibility program is August 3, 2009.

#### FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

Richard Doucette, Federal Aviation Administration, New England Region, Airports Division, 12 New England Executive Park, Burlington, Massachusetts 01803, Telephone (781) 238–7613.

Documents reflecting this FAA action may be obtained from the same individual.

**SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:** This notice announces that the FAA has given its overall approval to the Westfield-Barnes Airport noise compatibility program, effective August 3, 2009.

Under Section 104(a) of the Aviation Safety and Noise Abatement Act of 1979 (hereinafter the Act), an airport operator who has previously submitted a noise exposure map may submit to the FAA a noise compatibility program which sets forth the measures taken or proposed by the airport operator for the reduction of existing non-compatible land uses and prevention of additional non-compatible land uses within the area covered by the noise exposure maps.

The Act requires such programs to be developed in consultation with interested and affected parties including local communities, government agencies, airport users, and FAA personnel.